DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 478 776 HE 036 065

AUTHOR	Davis, Beverly J.
TITLE	Distance Learning: Educated Choices or Educational Technoism?
PUB DATE	2003-00-00
NOTE	8p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS
DESCRIPTORS	*College Faculty; *Computer Assisted Instruction; *Distance Education; *Higher Education; Program Implementation; *Teaching Methods

ABSTRACT

Recently, the "Chronicle of Higher Education" shared the results of a survey on distance learning that showed that attitudes toward distance learning were more favorable among those faculty members who had taught distance learning courses. Among the 72% of faculty members who had tried distance classes there was a general apprehension about faculty time commitment and increased workloads encouraged by higher education institutions. In the educational world, "Technoism" is the word used to describe the condemnation, guilt, and shame one feels when questioning the educational benefits of technology and education. Whether faculty members will be able to make educated choices or whether the future of distance education will be guided by Technoism remains to be determined. This paper offers recommendations to college faculty for the effective and appropriate use of distance learning. These include: (1) do not sacrifice substance for style; (2) try to have face-to-face meetings at least once or allow for some type of video-conferencing or real-time communication between student and teacher; (3) do not sacrifice teaching philosophy because of Technoism; and (4) do not use technology for the sake of technology without evaluating its usefulness. (Contains 11 references.) (SLD)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

DISTANCE LEARNING: EDUCATED CHOICES OR EDUCATIONAL TECHNOISM?

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE, AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY, HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

B. Davis

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2A

ED 478 776

Beverly J. Davis
Purdue University
1733 Northside Blvd.
South Bend, IN 46615
Bjdavis@pusb.iusb.edu
(P) 574-237-6581
(F) 574-237-4286

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Abstract

Recently *Chronicle of Higher Education* shared the results of a survey on distance learning. It was found that attitudes toward distance education were more favorable among those faculty members who had taught distance-learning courses. In fact, 72% of this cohort felt positive about distance learning. In addition, 51% of faculty members who had not taught distance classes felt positive about distance learning[2]. However, of those 72% who had tried distance learning, there was a general apprehension about the faculty time commitment and increased workloads encouraged by higher educational institutions. Other faculty concerns include quality of student learning and the appropriateness of distance learning environments. Many have suggested educational institutions stand to experience financial windfalls from Internet courses but what are the long-term implications for faculty? Is "Technoism®" the driving force behind the inundation of technology in educational institutions and will faculty be allowed to make educated choices without fear of reprisal? In the educational realm, Technoism is the word used to describe the condemnation, guilt, and shame one feels when questioning the educational benefits of technology and education. Recommendations for effective and appropriate utilization of Distance Learning will be offered for new faculty.

Distance Learning

Many higher educational institutions encourage development and implementation of on-line courses or distance learning. E. T. Robinson recently warned, "In the milieu of technological change, the integration of distance education into any university may not only appear to be the logical next step, but may even suggest the possibility of a financial windfall[9]. According to market researcher, International Data Corporation, about two million students take on-line courses from U.S higher educational institutions and that number is predicted to elevate to five million by the year 2006[1]. This research also observed that nearly one half of the 4000 major colleges and universities in the U.S. now offer courses over the Internet or use the Web to enhance college classes. The questions needing to be answered include; what are the long-term implications for faculty, what is the quality of student learning, and are courses offered using appropriate learning environments? Is Technoism the driving force behind the inundation of technology in educational institutions and will faculty be allowed to make educated choices without fear of reprisal?

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

HE036005

Educational Technoism

In 1999, I coined the term Technoism. Technoism is defined as the suppressed skepticism and blind compliance towards the uncontrolled and rapid inundation of the technology revolution. Technoism is forced conformity and it silences the critics of the chaotic progression of technology in our lives. Because of Technoism, people jump on the bandwagon, fearing condemnation and avoiding the feeling of being ostracized from the techno-savvy. Technoism is not to be confused with techno-phobia and those whom refuse to fall victim to this phenomenon called Technoism are not Luddites. In the educational realm, Technoism is the word used to describe the condemnation, guilt, and shame one feels when questioning the educational benefits of the coupling of education and technology. In higher educational institutions, is Technoism pressuring faculty to jump on board even with reservation? Three overall reasons for faculty concerns on distance education will be discussed and each will be evaluated using Technoism to extract the underlying issues.

Faculty Concerns

Faculty Time Commitment and Increased Workloads

Recently *Chronicle of Higher Education* shared the results of a survey on distance learning. It was found that attitudes toward distance education were more favorable among those who had taught distance-learning courses. In fact, 72% of this cohort felt positive about distance learning. In addition, 51% of faculty members who had not taught distance classes felt positive about distance learning[2]. However, of those 72% who had tried distance learning, there was a general apprehension about the faculty time commitment and increased workloads encouraged by higher educational institutions. Faculty is not typically paid more for on-line courses and the development and time commitment expected is significantly higher than the time spent in traditional preparation and classroom teaching. In addition, faculty at numerous colleges and universities have expressed concern of forced participation in distance learning development and facilitation of e-courses[6]. Will Technoism allow academic institutions to take the power and control for curriculum decisions from faculty? In fact, in 1996 the American Federation of Teachers released a paper on the use of technology in education encouraging faculty members to seek curbs on the adoption of technology in teaching[10]. The Federation also encouraged faculty members to utilize technology in teaching while encouraging opposition to courses taught on the Internet unless it meets faculty members' standards of quality. Most importantly, the paper encouraged the bargaining for employment contracts that protect the jobs of faculty members who choose *not* to use the new technologies. For fear that non-compliance will jeopardize jobs, Technoism silences the faculty who question the overuse of technology in education.

Overall research shows there is meager criticism from faculty members on the inundation of distance learning into higher education. But critics who have spoken out question the increased workloads and lack of increased salary for the extra workload. There is also widespread concern about forced use of new technologies in classrooms and the fate of

those who choose the traditional route in education[6]. The few outspoken have also warned about the possible loss of power of curriculum in academe. Without a doubt, distance learning has a place in higher education. However, we must not allow Technoism to silence the critics. Faculty members should be allowed to make educated choices without fear of retribution.

Quality of Student Learning

Another faculty concern focuses on the quality of educational learning provided to students. Recently, faculty at Washington State University objected to an initiative involving courses to be delivered solely on the Internet and via e-mail because it was feared faculty would "enable learning without any direct contact with faculty[11]." At the elite Harvard Business School, there is a general belief it would be impossible to replicate its classroom education online[1]. Similarly, last year MIT faculty nixed teaching classes online fearing it would detract from the residential experience. MIT does post classroom notes and syllabi, but that is no substitute for actual teaching so faculty aren't worried about the threat to classroom learning[1]. Barry Munitz, past Chancellor of the California State University System and current president and chief executive officer of the J. Paul Getty Trust suggests, "Ironically, the greatest challenge (of the convenience institutions) will be to our most respected institutions, for they are least likely to perceive a threat or to feel any need to challenge their basic assumptions[7]." Mr. Munitz continued by suggesting Ivy League institutions couple the perception of quality with restricted access to it. He envisioned a world where students could choose between an Ivy League education or a canned convenience program through on-line courses. Mr. Munitz paused to question the quality-price association. Ivy League Schools have indeed taken the high road. But in other cases, Technoism dictates decision-making even when on-line education produces less than desirable results. Recently Byron Brown, a Michigan State University economics professor, researched how on-line students measured up to classroom students, both taking the same economics course[7]. His findings, published in the *American Economic Review*, show that virtual students generally scored significantly lower on examinations than did classroom students, especially when attempting more complex problems[8]. Yes, on-line courses are financially beneficial for educational institutions, but is it providing a proper educational experience for students? As Peter Manicas states in the paper, *Higher Education on the Brink*[6]:

> "The traditional university is highly labor intensive and thus costly. Currently, except in the convenience institutions, the use of technologies have tended to supplement, rather than replace older modes and thus have added to costs without much gain. As always, technology has both a light side and a dark side. The dark side is likely to become the one realized. Thus, instead of improved discussion, equality of discussion among all members, collaborative and active learning, the instructor as expert and facilitator, we are getting taped lectures, canned WEB courses, automated correspondence courses, and more generally, a minimizing of high-cost active instruction for low-cost automation." (p.38).

Even K-12 educators have questioned the benefits of technology in the classroom. There is a growing concern that there is too much emphasis on technology in classrooms, that schools are throwing money at it and not getting much in return[5]. "There is no evidence that using computers or the Internet improves learning," said Alan Warhaftig, coordinator of Learning in the Real World[5]." Technoism seems to be driving K-12 as observed through the following statement by Hank Bromley, professor of education at State University of New York at Buffalo[5]: "Schools, pushing for technology in the classroom, need to ask themselves whether it fits in with some educational vision. Too often, administrators go to the latest technology because of some nebulous sense that they will be left behind if the don't. First they get it and then they try to figure out what to do with it."

We must not allow Technoism to flourish and silence those questioning the use of technology in education. Those who question allow for the elimination of ill-advised educational pursuits on the WEB. Some of those ill-advised pursuits are those which challenge the perception of appropriate learning environments.

Appropriate Learning Environments

Controversies over distance learning are not debates between "Modernizers" and "Luddites" but disagreements over the particular situations in which distance learning is appropriate[6]. I recently opened a course catalog of a local higher educational institution and noticed a distance learning course on "Public Speaking." How does one develop appropriate speaking and presentation skills over the Internet? For example, one may be able to learn the control panel of aircraft, but would you fly with a pilot that took the course on-line and had no practical experience? Most likely not. On-line courses certainly offer more flexible delivery. However, one question remains; how effective is the learning experience and what are the long-term implications for the students? Financially profitable for educational institutions; yes. Educationally responsible for students of educational institutions; not always. Margaret Stewart, in the March, 2001 *Teaching Professor,* shared her experience with distance learning. She stated, "I came away from even a positive experience of e-teaching feeling ambivalent. The time may come when disadvantages appear so inevitable that they become invisible as well. That time will certainly come if we do not highlight what we are perceiving now[11]." Professor Stewart expressed hope that by sharing conflicted feelings, we will share a constructive future for distance learning. As stated previously, the "ambivalence" seems to live through inappropriate uses of distance learning. Andy DePaolo, director of Stanford Center for Professional Development commented recently that on-line instruction will never be as good as face-to-face instruction[1]. His center does, however, offer some on-line graduate courses in engineering. It is evident that most faculty are open-minded and willing to experiment with e-learning, however, there are reservations for potential abuse of the device allowing financial gains to rule over quality of education. Technoism, silencing those critics, quickens the acceleration of misuse of distance learning. When Technoism flourishes, courses such as "Public Speaking" will be offered on-line.

Recommendations for New Faculty

The partnering of education and technology will be part of educator's professional careers. "Get on board or be left behind," "It is the future of education," we are told as we are pushed and prodded towards distance learning adoption and acceptance. These types of admonishments which educators experience routinely are products of Technoism. It isn't that e-learning has no value. As one author stated, "Unless universities reclaim their core purpose-taking responsibility for higher education in the sense of higher order knowing, ability to synthesize and integrate the fragmented pieces of the meta-processes at work in society-the megatrends of dehumanization will become world destiny[4]." This author continues by proposing that what is needed is the courage of university leaders and faculty generally to reclaim their potentially powerful and central position of providing value-added knowledge-wisdom-not just bytes of information.

The following recommendations offer guidance to new faculty for the appropriate utilization of distance learning as a learning tool:

1. Don't sacrifice substance for style. Although designing on-line courses may keep you in the technological loop and may demonstrate your graphics skills, substance can be lost when designing canned courses. It is possible to design courses on-line as long as the designer does not lose focus of course objectives, which should take precedence over style. Studies have shown that at university level, students feel the use of modern technology only provides an attractive presentation format but does little to enhance the learning.

2. There is something isolating with the communicative limitations of electronic interactions. A good rule of thumb when offering an on-line course is to insist on face-to-face meetings periodically during the semester. If distance makes this impossible, allow for video-conferencing or some type of "real-time" communication or direct contact with faculty.

3. Don't sacrifice your teaching philosophy because of Technoism. If you must participate in distance education, evaluate your teaching philosophy and determine how you will meet your personal teaching objectives if you teach courses on-line. Evaluate, question, share conflicted feeling with other faculty, and make an educated choice to remain true to your teaching philosophy.

4. Lastly, do not use technology for the sake of technology without evaluating the educational usefulness of such said technology. Will the technology enhance the learning experience? Will it facilitate learning of course objectives? Will it provide reasonable return on investment; meaning will the investment prepare students adequately for the future? Does it meet faculty members' standards of quality? As we observed through the K-12 example, many administrators only evaluated the efficiency and effectiveness of classroom technology after purchase. At all educational levels, we are shifting from process to outcomes-based learning. If we rely on technology for this

challenge, we must evaluate first before investing rather than allowing the Technoism choice, which is to invest first and evaluate later.

Technoism may be the driving force behind the inundation of technology in educational institutions, however, there is no question the Internet is here to stay. Educators need to step back, evaluate technology in our institutions and make educated choices without fear of reprisal or condemnation.

References

1. *Business Week* (December 3, 2001). Giving it the old online try. pp. 76-80
2. Carr, S. (July 7, 2000). Many professors are optimistic on distance learning, survey finds. *The Chronicle of Higher Education, v. XLVI, No. 44,* p. 35.
3. Davis, B.J. & Crispo, A.W. (Spring, 2002) Technology in the classroom: bells and whistles of technoism or technoligcal tools to facilitate learning? ISETA Newsletter.
4. Robinson, E. T. (November, 2000). The human component. *Syllabus,* pp. 54-65.
5. Skolnik, M. (2000). The virtual university and the professoriate. In *The university in transformation: Global perspectives on the futures of the university.* Ed. Inayatullah, S. & Gidley, J. Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey. Pp. 55-67.
6. Stewart, M.E. (March, 2001). Distance learning: Tradeoffs and ambivalence. *Teaching Professor, V. 15, No. 3,* pp. 1-3.
7. *Psychology Today, V. 35, No.4.* (August, 2002). Learn.com. p. 56.
8. Manicas, P. (2000). Higher education at the brink. In *The university in transformation: Global perspectives on the futures of the university.* Ed. Inayatullah, S. & Gidley, J. Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey. Pp. 31-40.
9. Neubauer, D. (2000). Will the future include us? Reflections of a practitioner of higher education. In *The university in transformation: Global perspectives on the futures of the university.* Ed. Inayatullah, S. & Gidley, J. Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey. Pp. 41-54.
10. Higgins, L. (October 18, 2001). Use of technology in classrooms questioned. In *South Bend Tribune, South Bend, IN.* Knight Ridder Newspapers.
11. Gidley, J. (2000). Unveiling the human face of university futures. In *The university in transformation: Global perspectives on the futures of the university.* Ed. Inayatullah, S. & Gidley, J. Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey. pp. 235-245.

CE085251

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

ERIC

REPRODUCTION RELEASE

(Specific Document)

I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

Title: Distance Learning: Educated Choices or Educational Technoism?	
Author(s): Beverly J. Davis	
Corporate Source: Association of Leadership Educators	Publication Date: July, 2003

II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, *Resources in Education* (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce and disseminate the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following three options and sign at the bottom of the page.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 1 documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

Level 1

☐

Check here for Level 1 release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche or other ERIC archival media (e.g., electronic) and paper copy.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2A documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE, AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY, HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2A

Level 2A

☑

Check here for Level 2A release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche and in electronic media for ERIC archival collection subscribers only

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2B documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2B

Level 2B

☐

Check here for Level 2B release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche only

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits.
If permission to reproduce is granted, but no box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.

I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce and disseminate this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche or electronic media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries.

Sign here, → please

Signature: Beverly J. Davis	Printed Name/Position/Title: Associate Professor	
Organization/Address: 1733 Northside Blvd, South Bend, IN 46615	Telephone: 574-237-6581	FAX: 574-237-4286
	E-Mail Address: bjdavis@pusb.iusb.edu	Date: July 14, 2003

(over)

III. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY INFORMATION (FROM NON-ERIC SOURCE):

If permission to reproduce is not granted to ERIC, *or*, if you wish ERIC to cite the availability of the document from another source, please provide the following information regarding the availability of the document. (ERIC will not announce a document unless it is publicly available, and a dependable source can be specified. Contributors should also be aware that ERIC selection criteria are significantly more stringent for documents that cannot be made available through EDRS.)

Publisher/Distributor:
Address:
Price:

IV. REFERRAL OF ERIC TO COPYRIGHT/REPRODUCTION RIGHTS HOLDER:

If the right to grant this reproduction release is held by someone other than the addressee, please provide the appropriate name and address:

Name: Association of Leadership Educators
Address: http://aces.uivc.edu/~ale/

V. WHERE TO SEND THIS FORM:

Send this form to the following ERIC Clearinghouse:

Acquisitions Coordinator
ERIC/ACVE
1900 Kenny Road
Columbus, OH 43210-1090

However, if solicited by the ERIC Facility, or if making an unsolicited contribution to ERIC, return this form (and the document being contributed) to:

ERIC Processing and Reference Facility
1100 West Street, 2nd Floor
Laurel, Maryland 20707-3598

Telephone: 301-497-4080
Toll Free: 800-799-3742
FAX: 301-953-0263
e-mail: ericfac@inet.ed.gov
WWW: http://ericfac.piccard.csc.com

EFF-088 (Rev. 9/97)
PREVIOUS VERSIONS OF THIS FORM ARE OBSOLETE